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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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State of Wisconsin

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Plain Talk for parents about your 4 to 5 year old

Understanding your 4 to 5 year old

Every child and parent is unique. This brochure highlights some general patterns of growth and development that apply to most children.

As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you will discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills. You will find your own ways to use old and new ideas, to fit your individual personality, your family life, and your child's needs.

General Traits

- Begins to play and share with other children
- Enjoys active games
- Can learn to count three objects and print one or two recognizable letters
- Likes dressing up for fun and entertaining others
- Imaginary playmates are common
- May boast, lie and swear
- Sexual exploration and curiosity are shown through play
- Has a "Why" for every occasion
- Knows own name and age, the number of brothers and sisters in the family and their names
- Toileting is now an established routine for most children
- May dress and undress without much help and can unbutton some buttons
- Beginning to draw faces and stick people

What a Parent Can Do

- Give your child lots of opportunities to climb and crawl, run and tumble.
- Exercise as a family with walks, ball playing, trips to the playground.
- Be patient in answering questions - even the same one repeatedly.
- Be aware of your child's need to spend time with an adult of the opposite sex.
- Praise your child's accomplishments. "I like the way you put your toys away."
- Supervise and when possible share television viewing.
- Provide opportunities for group play. Consider a preschool or Head Start program.
- Take your child to the library and let him or her choose books to take home.
- Set aside time for just you and your child to read or talk together about events of the day.
- Help your child begin to learn colors, shapes, letters and numbers.

Toys for the 4-5 year old

- Colored paper, paste, blunt scissors
- Play dough
- Crayons
- Finger paints
- Packing boxes (large and sturdy for a child to climb on)
- Sand toys (spoons, scoops, pails, sifters)
- Cars, trucks, boats, trains
- Blocks in a variety of sizes
- Dolls (preferably rubber for water play)
- Broom, mops, dustcloth, toy dishes and pans
- Costume box (hats, pocketbooks, shoes, scarves, lengths of cloth)
- Books, magazines to read
- Puzzles with 10-12 pieces
- Lego or other table construction toys
- Potatoes, other vegetables, and sponges cut in shapes for printing